

STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF MEN

<http://www.nh.gov/csm>

Minutes for the Thirty-Third Commission Meeting
March 30, 2007 1-4 PM
Upham Walker House, Concord, NH

These minutes were taken by Scott Garman.

Members Present: Joe Mastromarino, Scott Garman, Mike Geanoulis, Gus Lerandeau.

Members Absent: Marshall Hickok, David Lauren.

Others Present: Richard Smaglick.

Joe Mastromarino arrived at the meeting at 1:50 PM.

Secretary's Report:

Scott Garman moved to approve the October 2006 meeting minutes as presented. Mike Geanoulis seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved.

Scott Garman moved to approve the January 2007 meeting minutes as presented. Mike Geanoulis seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved.

Mike Geanoulis presented a meeting summary he wrote from the February meeting. Since there was not a quorum of members present, no business could be conducted at this meeting, but very important testimony was given by Dr. Stevan Gressitt, a psychiatrist. Mike had made a short summary of Dr. Gressitt's testimony and asked that this summary be included in the April meeting minutes, with the caveat that a disclaimer be included explaining that the meeting summary does not constitute official minutes of the Commission.

Scott Garman motioned to include this meeting summary in the April minutes. Mike Geanoulis seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved.

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Meeting Summary for the CSM, 23 Feb, 2007.

Meeting summary written by Michael Geanoulis.

NOTE: This meeting summary does not constitute official minutes of the NH Commission on the Status of Men, due to the fact that a quorum of members was not present during this meeting.

The Commission could only do minor house cleaning and take testimony from the public as there was no quorum for business,
which was deferred until the March meeting.

Members Present: Joe Mastromarino, Mike Geanoulis, Marshall Hickok.

Members Absent: Steve Gorin, Scott Garman, David Lauren, Gus Lerandeau.

Members of the Public: Hazel Davis, Dr. Stevan Gressitt, Psychiatrist

Approval of January's minutes were deferred, and Mr. Hickok noted that a letter and check were received from James MacFarland.

Mr. Mastromarino noted that the March 30 meeting was moved to the Upham Walker House, north of the State House.

Dr. Gressitt presented a voluminous report which was the result of his experiences with disturbed children. The summary given here cannot do justice to his presentation, and a URL has been created for those interested in the details of the data he drew upon:

http://www.nh.gov/csm/pas_gressitt.html

Hazel Davis also gave supplemental testimony on Parental Alienation Syndrome and the life-long damage done to children.

To summarize:

Dr. Gressitt would like to have seen HB529 (shared parenting 2006) and HB1585 (parenting time enforcement) pass, as they would have brought parents (often fathers) and children closer together.

He stated that disturbed children are a major public health issue; that they are being improperly diagnosed with ADHD; and that they seem to be taking an "oppositional" stance to life. He refers to this as a technical term, ODD (Oppositional Defiant Disorder).

His mosaic of variables includes; failure to penalize false allegations; improper evaluations by GAL's; refusal of the police to enforce the law; one-sided application of awards for attorneys fees; apathy by non-custodial parents who see going to court as a waste of time.

Dr. Gressitt sees a connection with court dysfunction and the suicide rates of both fathers and children.

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Treasurer's Report:

Due to the absence of David Lauren, the Treasurer's Report is deferred until the next meeting.

Public Input:

Richard Smaglick from Hooksett was invited to speak before the Commission. Mr. Smaglick discussed his own divorce situation, and explained that his children's school performance declined considerably when his parenting time was minimal, and that his daughter's school performance improved dramatically since she began living with him in 2006 in the absence of a court-ordered change in custody. He has been denied visitation time with both of his children by their mother many dozens of times over the last twelve years, sometimes for months on end. This has included many birthdays, Christmases, and multiple summer vacations, even after travel arrangements had been made. He was awarded increased weekly custodial time with his son in 2005, but has since spent only 3 days with him. Despite what Mr. Smaglick describes as the complete collapse of his son's school situation, he has little recourse, since the law presently allows the 13 year-old the choice of living exclusively with his mother. According to Mr. Smaglick, this situation does not provide his son with the effective guidance, discipline, and structure he so badly needs.

Mr. Smaglick had several recommendations of ways parenting time decisions and family courts could be improved:

- ◆ Aggressively remove the incentives for creating conflict in divorces. Requiring mediation is a good step, but people also need to realize that some parents consciously choose the legal advantages associated with high-conflict litigation, even when the system provides ample opportunities for more constructive, mediation-based approaches.
- ◆ Allowing teenage children to decide which parent to live with puts them into an awkward situation, and many times their choice may not be in their best interests. GALs are in a better position to make recommendations on this matter.
- ◆ Denial of visitation is a problem that has spiraled out of control, and effective penalty-based enforcement is badly needed. Motions for contempt are routinely and repeatedly denied in cases of chronic custodial interference. The courts regularly suggest potential future changes in custody in such situations, but these repeated suggestions are not acted upon, even when custodial interference persists over a decade or more.
- ◆ One possible system of progressive penalties for denial of visitation could include: A warning

upon the first offense, increasing fines for the second and third offenses, and increasing jail time for offenses after that. In lieu of jail time (due to potential financial pressures on prisons), an automatic reversal of parenting time arrangements could be used. Furthermore, any offense could also include automatic loss of parenting time for the offending parent.

Mr. Smaglick offered to help draft any possible future legislation that might address these issues, and seeks input from all interested parties on this matter.

Men's Equality Congress Conference Announcement:

Scott Garman announced that a men's issues conference is being held from July 13-14, 2007 in Washington, D.C, called the Men's Equality Congress. The topic of the conference this year is "Boys and the Boy Crisis." For more information, please see their web site at <http://www.trueequality.com>.

Prostate Cancer Screening Bill (HB 560):

Scott Garman distributed copies of HB 560, a bill that would require NH health insurance providers to pay for preventative screening of prostate cancer. Qualifying annual prostate exams would begin at age 50, or age 45 for individuals considered to be at high risk. Scott noted that a corresponding insurance requirement for breast cancer has existed for years and feels that this bill is of critical importance to the status of men in NH. The bill has been referred for further study and will not be voted upon until the fall 2007 legislative session.

Scott Garman moved to declare that the NH Commission on the Status of Men officially supports the passage of HB 560, as the bill was written on March 30, 2007. Mike Geanoulis seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved.

Gus Lerandeau left the meeting at 2:30 PM.